

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Yuma County law enforcement to get check for \$126,632

Yuma drug bust leads to forfeiture

(Phoenix, AZ—September 2, 2003) Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard announced today that forfeitures from a cocaine and marijuana smuggling organization in Yuma have resulted in a \$126,632.78 payment to Yuma law enforcement agencies.

The smuggling organization, with Yuma County, AZ and Fresno, CA locations, was operated by the Gonzalez brothers: Alberto Gutierrez, Ismael, Gabriel, Pablo and Jaime. Also involved were Ricardo Carranza, Linda Francisca Gonzalez, and Martha Sestiaga Gonzalez. The cocaine and marijuana was smuggled into the U.S. from Mexico.

The Yuma County Attorney's Office and the Arizona Attorney General's Office prosecuted the drug and money laundering cases, while the U.S. Attorney's Office conducted the criminal prosecutions of the members of the organization.

Several residences in Yuma and San Luis were forfeited and sold as part of the forfeiture action. Additional cash, bank accounts, vehicles, and boats were forfeited through U.S. Customs in separate proceedings, which are not included in the \$126,632.78 that is being sent to Yuma County law enforcement agencies. The Attorney General's Office also retained \$32,908.19 for use in pending drug investigations and prosecutions.

"This was collaboration at its best," said Attorney General Goddard. "We had local, state, and national agencies and organizations all working together to not only prosecute these people, but also to recover funds."

Among the law enforcement agencies which investigated these cases were the Southwest Border Alliance Narcotics Task Force, headed by Lieutenant Douglas Lee with special assistance from Task Force agent Phil Coffeen and IRS Agent Mike Suba; the Arizona offices of the United States Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security, headed by Special Agents in Charge Robert M. Gattison and Thomas DeRouchey, with special assistance by Agent Steve Ruble, Tucson.

Involved on the prosecutorial side were Assistant Attorney General Charles R. Johnson of the Financial Remedies Section of the Arizona Attorney General's Office, who prosecuted the forfeiture cases; the Yuma County Attorney's Office, headed by Patricia Orozco, County Attorney (particularly then-Deputy YCA Mark Evans--now an Assistant AG), who initiated the forfeiture cases in Yuma; and Ann Scheel of the U.S. Attorney's Office, who prosecuted the criminal cases.

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